

THE PACIFIC
Commercial Advertiser.

SALT WATER BUBBLES.

A MAN OVERBOARD.

It was the first watch of the night. The ship *Froissard*, bound from the Cape of Good Hope to Boston, was "running down the trades," with standing-sails on both sides, awl and alott, and royal and sky-sails set. The breeze was steady with a smooth sea. For more than a week not a brace or a clueless had been started. This "running down the southeast trades" is the poetry of navigation.

The dark watch was on deck; and clustered together on the forecastle, the sailors, a social, careless, happy set of fellows, were busily engaged in conversation, to pass the time, and drive dull care away. After discussing several important subjects with a degree of skill and profundity which reflected credit on their good sense and intelligence, they entered upon the interesting subjects of the "hair-breadth escape" they had experienced.

Several cases of a thrilling character were given, such as are not unrequent in the life of a sailor, when Colin Hartshorn, a bright-eyed, good-looking, middle-aged man, with iron muscles and a Herculean frame, addressing one of his watchmates rather abruptly, said, "Jack Randle, did you ever fall overboard at sea?"

"Never, shipmate," replied Jack Randle, "I never met with any accident of that kind, except a short while ago one dark night, while reading my book, on board the brig *Suzette Thompson*, in the Bay of Biscay, bound to Bordeaux—and while another of my shipmates, poor fellow, who was in the lee yard arm, was tossed into the water, five fathoms from the ship's side, and was never heard of afterwards, I was safely landed in the fore-top, with only a sprained wrist and a bruised figure-head."

"I was in the ship in the in the ship *Fatima*, bound to Liverpool, lying to under bare poles off the Isle of Sable," said a tough old Briton, "we shipped a sea which swept the decks, and washed overboard the second mate and the whole watch, who were all drowned except myself; and I was only saved by being entangled in the forecastle, which nearly twisted off my larboard leg before it got on board. And, shipmates, I have seen and saluted, to see those poor fellas in the lee yard's well, broad off on the weather quarter, before they went down, rising to the top of the waves, and stretching out their arms towards the ship, imploring for aid which could not be given."

"Ay, such things are sad to witness," said Jack Randle. But I spose they are all right. A man what goes to sea, must expect to meet with rubbers now and then—for, otherwise, d'ye see, everybody would want to be a sailor; so we must be thankful for our lot, such as it is. We have no right to grumble at a hard chance."

"I say, Colin," inquired one of the men, who was carelessly leaning against the windlass bits, "did you ever fall overboard?"

"Once, and only once," replied Colin Hartshorn, "but I didn't take it so kindly as Jack Randle is disposed to; and while I was in the water, with the exception of ever getting lost, I might as well have been dead."

"That's for natural, I suppose," said old Jack, "after all. But Colin, lad, tell us all about it, how it happened. Give us the particulars, old fellow, as the sad looking man in the play said to the ghost on the castle wall."

Thus gravely adjured, Colin Hartshorn needed to the wishes of his watchmates, and spun the following yarn, illustrative of the singular incidents which chear the life of a sailor.

"About eight years ago, I was a sailor before the mast on board the brig *Crocodile*. Captain Romney, bound from New York to Gibralter and a market. The *Crocodile* was a fine vessel, and we had good usage on board. Everything went on pleasantly. There was a perfect understanding between the cabin and the forecastle. The men knew their duty, and were anxious to perform it; and while I was on the first night out, we passed the light house on Sandy Hook was still in sight, that so long as we did our duty and conformed to the well established rules of discipline, we should be treated like men—and he was as good as his word.

We had been about a fortnight on the passage, and were already more than half way across the Atlantic, not having spoken a single vessel up to that time, when, one evening at the close of the dog-eat-dog, I was sent on deck to bring up signals on the weather quarter, and the Captain, who was on deck, ordered the light sail to be taken in. The flying-jib having been hauled down, I passed out over the bowsprit to furl it. I reached the flying-jibboom end, and had just gathered the sail together ready for passing the gasket, when the squall struck the brig. It came with a sudden gash, the sail, light as it was, flapped heavily, caught me around the head, and twisted me over the boom, so that before I could catch the jib-boom or any other rope I fell into the water.

The ship, dashing onward, passed directly over me, rubbing against my sides and giving me an idea of the unpleasant effect of the process of keel-hauling. But I came to the surface when I got in the wake, and pulled and blowed like a porpoise to recover my breath. I could swim like a seal, and did not at first realize the danger of my situation. I looked around for the ship, and saw that the mains were under the clouds. I could see her distinctly, and also hear the shouts on board. "A man overboard! Colin has fallen from the jib-boom!" was repeated fore and aft.

The Captain, a noble-hearted man, was all alive on this occasion. He instantly gave the orders, in a loud and decided tone. "Hard down the helm! Hard down! Clear away the stern! Turn the bow round! Throw the jib-boom over the hatch-hatch! Square away the main yard!"

Then mounting the taftail, he called out in a clear and encouraging voice, and every syllable he uttered I heard with the utmost distinctness, for at such times, shipmates, a man's voice are amazingly acute. Keep up your spirits, Colin! Don't be disengaged! The boat will be along side of you in no time!"

The alarm and a hooecon were thrown overboard the moment the alarm was given, and while I was but a short distance from the ship. Those floating objects I attempted to reach, knowing that my only hope consisted not in attempting to swim toward the ship, which was going through the water at the rate of seven or eight knots when I fell overboard, but in swimming with my strength to the head above the surface until I could be hauled and manned and sent to my relief. After a struggle in which I was nearly exhausted, I found the booby hatch, to which I clung as to an ark of safety.

As the ship was going rapidly through the water, with the wind free when the squall struck her, she was at least a quarter of a mile off, before she was stopped and the boat lowered, and even when her way through the water was stopped, I could not be hauled and sent to my relief, for a man could swim in smooth water.

Clinging to the booby hatch, which was something like a large open box six or seven feet square and two feet deep, constructed of light pine plank, I could keep my head out of the water most of the time without much effort, and I thus had an opportunity and abundance of leisure to reflect on my situation. Darkness came on, and I lay there, with my eyes closed, until I realized I had been seen all after I had fallen overboard; and in that dangerous hour, earnestly prayed to God that the boat might be pulled toward the spot where I was floating on the water. I shuddered at the possibility that in the darkness my shipmate might not know in what direction to steer, and after looking for me in vain might suppose I was drowned, and return to the ship without accomplishing their object, and leaving me to my fate.

The boat put off from the ship. I could see the dark object on the water as it approached. My heart fluttered with hope, but soon sank within me as the men ceased rowing while the boat was still at a distance. I could hear the shouts of the men calling out my name, as they row distantly but faintly above the murmur of the waves around me. The crew of the boat, however, were at first silent, and then, with shouts louder than their own; but my voice was weak and hoarse from exhaustion, and I soon became aware that in spite of my utmost exertions, I could not make myself heard.

The boat came no nearer, but went off in another direction, and then returned toward me; the men continued, at short intervals, to call upon my name, and then they pulled round and round and backward and forward several times.

It was a moment of maddening suspense, while I exerted in vain all my power of voice and limb to let them know that I was still alive, although within their reach, and by a slight effort on their part could be saved.

A light was displayed from the ship, and soon a musket was fired as a signal for the boat to return? And shipmates, you may conceive to my dismay, you may imagine the horror which froze my blood, when the conviction was forced upon me that the boat had abandoned the search, and last I saw a man so astonished as Capt. Romney was when he caught my eye at I was near the gunwale. He turned as pale as an icelberg, and stepped back a pace or two as if he had seen a ghost; but when I lifted my hat, he exclaimed, "It is Colin Hartshorn, as sure as there are alligators in Florida!" Boys!" he exclaimed, turning to the crew, "here's our old shipmate Colin Hartshorn returned to us safe and sound, having managed somehow to get to windward of Davy Jones after all!"

It was a moment of maddening suspense, while I exerted in vain all my power of voice and limb to let them know that I was still alive, although within their reach, and by a slight effort on their part could be saved.

With straining eyeballs I still gazed in the direction of the noble vessel on whose decks I lately trod, and threw my hands toward her in my agony, madly entreating in hoarse whispers for that succor, which I knew I could not receive.

"It is Colin Hartshorn, as sure as there are alligators in Florida!" Boys!" he exclaimed, turning to the crew, "here's our old shipmate Colin Hartshorn returned to us safe and sound, having managed somehow to get to windward of Davy Jones after all!"

Indeed, while indulging in these speculations I felt a strange kind of curiosity, an earnest desire to know what would become of me—not to mention the fact that I would be no destination after death? Should I be buried dead and eternally for the many sins I had committed on earth, or would the Lord, in his infinite mercy, taking into view the few opportunities I had had of improving my mind and morals, and the many temptations that had beset me on every side, forgive my sins and take me to his bosom?

And I assure you, shipmates, at that hour which I considered my dying hour, I sincerely hoped for salvation.

Then again a gleam of hope would fit across my mind. I was not so badly off as I might have been!

I had something to cling to, which the weather should continue moderate, would aid me to float perhaps for a long time on the water, and my heart thrashed with a pleasurable sensation as the idea flashed across my mind that if I could hold on until the next morning, it was possible that I might be picked up by some passing vessel, and if one passed within a quarter of a mile, it was a thousand to one to me against my being discovered, having no signal to display. I am abashed all alone, and could hardly help regretting that my miseries were prolonged.

Then again fortune would come to my aid, and I made a desperate effort to save myself as I could move a muscle—to save off to the most distant possible the hour of death; for, oh, shipmates, life is sweet!

Though we sometimes meet with rough weather, head winds, squalls, typhoons and pampers on the voyage—yet we also meet with prosperous gales, balmy breezes and unruffled seas. Yes, there are many joys and comforts as well as troubles in this world, and I often thought of my home in childhood, of schooldays when I ran about the woods and pastures, gay and happy in the present, and looking forward to joy in the future. I thought of my parents, of my kind and loving mother, my brothers and sisters, none of whom I had seen for several years—and they never seemed so dear and near to me as at that moment, when I was about to leave the waters of another world. But it is impossible to tell how I thought of my home in childhood, of schooldays when I ran about the woods and pastures, gay and happy in the present, and looking forward to joy in the future. 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